

## 02/23/2009 This Week in Congress

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February 23, 2009

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." Congress did not meet this week, which allowed me to travel to areas around the state and visit with many Kansans. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Visiting Offices in Dodge City

Ford County Farm Service Agency: On Friday while in Dodge City, I visited the Ford County Farm Service Agency (FSA) office. I was able to meet with Joe Gleason, county executive director of the Ford County FSA, and members of his staff. During my visit, we discussed the implementation for the 2008 Farm Bill, staffing and updated computer capabilities. We also discussed legislative proposals that may help FSA employees better serve farmers. Thanks to Joe and his staff for hosting me.

Fairpoint Communications, Inc.: Also on Friday, I toured Fairpoint Communications, Inc. in Dodge City. Fairpoint Communications owns several rural telephone companies in western Kansas, including an operation center in Dodge City. FairPoint operates 32 local exchange companies in 18 states and is a leading provider of a full range of communications services to residential and business customers. I met with many staff members to discuss important rural telecom issues in our state. Thank you to Pat Morse for inviting me to visit.

#### Attending the First Kansas Region I Constitution Bee in Hays

This Saturday, I attended the first Kansas Region I Constitution Bee at the Fox Pavilion in Hays. The Constitution Bee is a program organized by the Bill of Rights Institute in Washington, D.C. The Bill of Right Institute is a nonprofit organization that develops programs to teach students about the U.S. and what it means to be an American citizen.

During the competition, high school government students throughout the First Congressional District completed a written test and then answered questions about American history and current events. The academic competition is a great way to keep students interested and engaged in government and politics. Congratulations to Hays High School seniors Jennifer David and my daughter Alex Moran, who placed first and second in the competition, and to Thomas More Prep-Marian High School senior Paul Flesher and Ellis High School senior Logan Bittel, who came in third and fourth. I wish all four students luck this April when they compete at the state event in Wichita.

Thanks to the teachers and principals from the participating high schools that helped coordinate the event. Also thanks to Unified School District #489 and The Learning Center of Ellis County for hosting the Constitution Bee.

#### Annual Listening Tour Continues in the Big First

This week, I was in Goodland and Dodge City conducting my town hall tour stops. These meetings help me stay in touch with Kansans and learn about what issues continue to be important to them. During each town hall, I am able to listen to folks' concerns and take that information back with me to Washington, D.C.

In each town hall this week, I discussed the concerns that I have with the economic spending bill that the Congress passed this week, and the reasons that I was not able to support it.

Residents are invited to attend the town halls to share their thoughts with me on current issues. [Click here to view the listening tour schedule and the areas I have stopped this year.](#)

## In the Office

Representatives from Wichita State University, the University of Kansas and Kansas State University were in the office this week to provide an update on research and projects taking place at their respective schools. In with the group were WSU Dean of Engineering Zulma Toro-Ramos of Wichita, KU Dean of Engineering Stuart Bell and KU Government Affairs Director Keith Yehle of Lawrence and KSU Dean of Engineering John English and KSU Government Affairs Director Sue Peterson of Manhattan.

Brian Dunn of St. John was in with Stafford County Farm Bureau to discuss ways local farmers and ranchers can be more proactive in explaining agriculture production practices to urban elected officials. I appreciate young producers, like Brian, who go the extra mile to preserve their rural communities and create opportunities for the next generation of Kansas producers. Henry and Jane Stover of Overland Park also stopped by this week.

Kelly Harvey of Lawrence and Shana Oltman of Kansas City visited my Washington, D.C., office to receive a tour of the United States Capitol.

Very truly yours,

Jerry